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CONSEQUENCES OF CERTAIN POSSIBLE US COURSES OF ACTION WITH
RESPECT TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

THE PROBLEM

To determine (1) the probable consequences of various
actions that might be taken to forestall further Communist ag-
gression in Southeast Asia and (2) the degree to which the UK,
France, and other UN members would support each of such actions.

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The present Communist strategy in southeast Asia provides for the ultimate conquest of the area by Communist-controlled native armies and regimes with the general support of Communist China, but without the overt large-scale use of Chinese troops or "volunteers." Recent inconclusive reports have raised the possibility that this strategy may give way to one of open invasion by Communist China. Conceivably such a shift in strategy could take place either because the Communists feel that open invasion would pay a sizeable dividend in terms of area conquered or in terms of the resulting attrition of Western strength, or because the Communists fear that a shift in the military balance in southeast Asia may create a military threat to Communist China or to Communist forces in Indochina that cannot be countered by present policies. In either case, the questions the Communists would have to face prior to a shift in strategy include the crucial problem of probable western counter-measures to a Chinese Communist invasion.

Short of an immediate internationalization of the present fighting in southeast Asia, which is not considered in this paper, the West is faced by a number of theoretical actions that might serve to deter the Communists from adopting a policy of open aggression by providing the Communists with indications of western intentions to resist aggression. The West, with French, Indochinese, or Burmese consent, could call upon the UN to form a sub-group of the Peace Observation Committee (POC) to keep a watch on the Chinese border for possible signs of aggression. The West could, through diplomatic or public channels, issue a stern warning to Communist China that aggression would not be tolerated, or it could issue threats of specific sanctions, up to and including the threat of a counter-offensive against the Chinese mainland. The

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warnings or threats, which would be in amplification of such recent statements as Senator Cooper's declaration in the UN on January 28, could be issued under the aegis of the UN or by the US alone, or jointly by the US, the UK, and France. Since these actions would not alter the present military balance in southeast Asia, they would not by themselves precipitate a shift in Communist strategy. They might, however, be effective in deterring the Communists from increased aggression.

The Communist leadership probably feels that the Western (i.e., the US) military capabilities are sufficient to jeopardize any Communist drive into southeast Asia if brought fully to bear on that area. The Communist leadership probably realizes, on the basis of recent events, that there is danger that the West will act against possible Communist aggression in southeast Asia, although there may exist some doubt concerning the effectiveness and speed of such action. The more the Communist realization of the probability of firm and effective Western counter-action is strengthened by warnings such as those considered in this paper, the less will be the danger that the Chinese Communists will adopt a policy of open military intervention. A Communist decision to invade southeast Asia in the face of a strong Western warning would involve a decision to precipitate a wider conflict which could easily expand into a world war. Present indications point to a probable Communist desire to avoid such an extension of local hostilities. The most effective deterrent threats will therefore be those that would force the Communists into a full realization of the difficulty of confining future aggression to a limited Communist-determined locale.

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The governments of France and the UK would probably agree to proposals for the creation of UN observation machinery for southeast Asia or for a general warning to Communist China, but would be reluctant to approve the threat of specific sanctions against Communist China. The UN might approve the creation of observation machinery, but would probably not support a strongly-worded warning or threat prior to any actual invasion.

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I. COMMUNIST INTENTIONS TOWARD MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA

A. Current Communist Strategy. The present Chinese Communist strategy toward revolutionary movements in Southeast Asia apparently is to provide these movements with moral support and limited military assistance, in order to facilitate the establishment wherever possible both of Communist-controlled native armies operating from strategic bases accessible to Communist China and of Communist regimes on China's periphery. Pei-p'ing seems to have supplied military aid on a significant scale only to those movements that have already demonstrated both viability and political reliability. Communist China seems to have observed the restriction that Southeast Asian movements should supply their own manpower and that Chinese "volunteers" should be utilized on a strictly limited and covert basis in technical and advisory positions. To date major quantities of material, advisors, and training facilities seem to have been provided only to the forces of Ho Chi Minh, with the Communist movements of Burma and Malaya receiving limited assistance. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] (a) the DRV Army does not require the aid of Chinese troops so long as no "united armed interference" is undertaken by the "imperialists;" (b) it is the "privilege and duty" of the Chinese Communist Party to give "moral support and technical aid" to Asian revolutionary movements; and (c) adequate military forces must be stationed on China's borders to resist possible attacks by the "imperialists" who may utilize Kuomintang remnants

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against Communist China. This report seems to describe the policy that has so far been followed by the Pei-p'ing regime.)

B. Recent Indications of a Possible Change in Strategy. During recent weeks there have been numerous reports describing purported Chinese Communist preparations for more active intervention in Indochina and possibly Burma and Thailand. However, many of these reports are of questionable reliability and some of them seem to represent deliberate plants intended to influence US policy. Nevertheless some of the activities described have been confirmed in part through other sources. In particular, it appears probable that additional Chinese Communist troops have been moved into the provinces on China's southern border [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

In addition, Communist propaganda from all sources concerning alleged Western plans for "aggression" in Southeast Asia has been greatly stepped up during recent weeks. However, reports of airfield improvements within jet range of Indochina, of the reequipping of Chinese troops near the border with Soviet supplies, of stepped-up materiel deliveries to the DRV forces, and of stockpiling of military equipment on the Chinese side of the border have not been confirmed.

None of the available data provides any conclusive evidence concerning Chinese Communist intentions. Troop movements, materiel stockpiling, [REDACTED] could all be explained as aspects of Pei-p'ing's announced program of military modernization and economic reconstruction, while the propaganda build-up could be merely a phase of the

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current world Communist campaign to demonstrate the "aggressive" intent underlying American proposals for a Korean settlement, for mutual security, and for the UN collective measures committee.

C. Factors Underlying a Possible Shift in Communist Strategy. More active Chinese intervention in Southeast Asia could conceivably be initiated for either of two general reasons: (a) the Communist leadership may feel that an increase in Chinese intervention would pay a sizeable dividend either in terms of the area conquered for Communism or in terms of the resulting attrition of Western strength; or (b) the Communist leadership may fear that a shift in the military balance in Southeast Asia may create a serious military threat either to the DRV or to South China which could not be countered by present policies. In either case, the Communist leadership would face the questions of whether Southeast Asia represents the most suitable and urgent locale for increased military activity, whether Chinese military intervention on other world Communist objectives, and, most important of all, what would be the probable Western counter-measures to Chinese intervention. The last of these considerations may be the crucial one.

D. Present Communist Estimate of Western Intentions. A number of recent developments in the West have contributed to the probable Communist estimate of Western counter-measures to alternative Chinese Communist courses of action in Southeast Asia. Chief among these has been the series of statements by prominent Western leaders to the effect that the West would meet a Communist invasion of Southeast Asia with the same resolution with which it met aggression in Korea. These statements have included (1) the Truman-Churchill communique of January 9, which recognized the "overriding

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need to counter the Communist threat" in the Far East and which referred to the tripartite US-UK-French military talks on "specific measures to strengthen the security of Southeast Asia;" (2) the press comments arising from the tripartite talks themselves and the press statements by French General of the Army Alphonse F. Juin, Commander of the Central European Ground Forces (NATO) asking for US air and naval (but not ground) units and for coordinated staff work in the event of an invasion of Indochina; (3) the speech by British Foreign Minister Eden at Columbia University on January 11, which noted that Chinese intervention in Indochina would "create a situation no less menacing than that which the UN met and faced in Korea;" (4) Winston Churchill's address to Congress on January 17, in which Churchill declared that "it would not be helpful to the common cause...if an effective truce in Korea led only to a transference of Communist aggression to Southeast Asia" and in which he made pointed reference to conferences between Eden and Acheson directed at placing "the problems of Southeast Asia in their right setting;" and (5) the statement made in the UN on January 28 by U.S. Senator Cooper and concurred in by the UK and French representatives, to the effect that any Communist aggression in Southeast Asia would be regarded as "a matter of direct and grave concern which would require the most urgent and earnest consideration by the United Nations."

The Communist evaluation of these statements has probably not been unequivocal, however. The Communists have noted, as indicated by their propaganda, the area of divergence in French, British, and American policies and interests in Asia. They have noted the political criticism leveled at Churchill in the UK for identifying too closely the British and American

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objectives in Asia. They have probably noted that the French delegate to the UN, in associating himself with the January 28 statement by Senator Cooper, confined himself to Indochina alone. The Communists have probably taken into account the fact that the public statements listed above contain no firm military commitment--even General Juin in his press statement asked only for US air and naval units in the event of an Indochina invasion. In addition, the Communists are undoubtedly cognizant of the fact that in each of the Western countries current political considerations may create a predisposition against additional Far Eastern commitments.

Despite the probability that the Communists expect some Western resistance to Communist aggression in Southeast Asia, a large area of doubt may remain as to precise Western intentions, particularly in regard to whether Western counter-measures will be local or will extend to the Chinese mainland and whether new aggression might lead to world war III. The Communists may feel that Western action will not be as resolute and sustained as it was in Korea and that initially it will be neither broad enough nor quick enough to counter effectively a rapid thrust at Indochina or Burma. The Communists probably do not expect a vigorous reaction by the West to a gradual deterioration of the anti-Communist position in Southeast Asia, nor do they probably expect a determined and effective coordinated effort at this time to extirpate the Communist movements of Southeast Asia. In general the Communists probably feel that they retain the initiative in Southeast Asia; that effective Western action will not be forthcoming during the next few months if Communist objectives are pursued with

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sufficient subtlety; but that there is danger of Western action if greatly augmented "assistance" to Southeast Asian Communist forces or an overt Chinese invasion is attempted. It cannot be determined whether the Communists view this danger as great enough at the present time to constitute a serious deterrent to aggression in southeast Asia.

The Communist uncertainty in regard to Western intentions probably does not extend to Western capabilities. The Communist leadership probably feels, on the basis of the Korean experience and information on US mobilization and atomic energy developments, that the West possesses the military capability to threaten seriously any Chinese Communist drive into southeast Asia if US and Western strength should be brought fully to bear on southeast Asia and China, and is not diverted to other areas.

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II. POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF VARIOUS DETERRENT ACTIONS OPEN TO THE WEST

If the danger of Western counter-measures is, as estimated, a major factor in Communist policy, increased Chinese Communist intervention in southeast Asia might be forestalled by providing the Communists with firmer indications of Western intentions. This could conceivably be done through the creation of a UN Peace Observation Commission sub-group to watch for signs of Chinese aggression in southeast Asia, through the issuance of a general warning to Communist China, and through threats of specific sanctions (embargo, blockade, defensive military action, or counter-offensive military action against mainland China) in the event of a Chinese invasion of southeast Asia. These actions would be effective as deterrents if they persuaded the Communist leadership of the West's determination to utilize its apparent military capability to counter effectively any Communist invasion of southeast Asia. A strong general warning or a threat of specific military action and particularly a threatened counter-offensive against the Chinese mainland might give Peiping great pause before initiating a policy of open military intervention in southeast Asia; a decision to invade in the face of such a warning would mean that the Communist leadership is willing to face a greater risk of an early general far eastern or world war than is now thought probable. However, a weakly-worded warning hedged with reservations, a threat limited to economic sanctions (embargo or blockade), or a warning that seemed to the Communists to be accompanied by an insufficient military commitment, would have the possible effect of increasing the danger of Chinese intervention, by apparently indicating the absence of a Western determination to stand firm in southeast Asia. Furthermore, if the Communist leadership should reach the conclusion that Western forces

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will attack the Chinese mainland regardless of Chinese Communist policies in southeast Asia, the possible deterrent effect of the policies discussed here would be nullified and the Communists might be provoked into an attack to forestall the inevitable Western blow.

It is unlikely that the mere threat of counter-measures would by itself precipitate increased hostilities in southeast Asia, unless the Communists now definitely plan an invasion, in which case they might advance their timetable to forestall the completion of Western plans for counter-measures. If Peiping plans no immediate overt aggression in southeast Asia, a warning or threat would be unlikely to have a provocative effect on Communist strategy, since, unlike actual increased military aid -- which is not considered in this paper, it presumably would not alter the military balance in southeast Asia. Even the creation of observation machinery would probably not by itself cause Communist military strategy to take ^a more aggressive turn, except possibly in the unlikely event that it threatened to cripple the present methods of Chinese aid to southeast Asian Communist movements.

Proposals for Western action along lines such as the above would probably meet with the general approval of the French and British governments but both would be reluctant to threaten specific sanctions, feeling that a more general warning is probably adequate. Both countries would accept the appointment of a POC team. The UN, however, would probably not support a strongly worded warning or threat prior to an actual invasion, although it might approve the creation of observation machinery.

The alternative actions under consideration in this paper are discussed more specifically in Annexes I and II to this paper.

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Annex I: ALTERNATIVES THEORETICALLY OPEN TO THE WEST

A. Formation of a UN Peace Observation Commission Sub-Group to Watch the Southeast Asia Situation. The value of frontier observation, even from one side of the border only, has been demonstrated by UN commissions in Greece and in Korea, where the reports submitted by the UN Commission on Korea helped considerably to make possible the prompt UN Security Council determination of North Korean aggression. The General Assembly in its "Uniting for Peace" resolution of November 3, 1950 established the Peace Observation Commission (POC) "which could observe and report on the situation in any area where there exists international tension the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security." These terms appear to apply to Indochina and Burma, but the POC may be utilized only upon the invitation or with the consent of the state into whose territory it would go, thus leaving the initiative to Burma and France and/or the Associated States. Burma may not approve POC action except as a result of actual Chinese invasion, and France and the Associated States have so far avoided bringing the threat of Chinese aggression before the UN. The POC can, of course, function most usefully only if called upon prior to overt aggression. The POC, however, has authority to appoint sub-commissions, such as that which was established on the request of the 6th General Assembly to stand by for dispatch to the Balkans. Such a stand-by group could conceivably be formed for Southeast Asia. It should be noted that the usefulness of the POC in Indochina would be curtailed by the fact that it would not be able to send observers to DRV territory and would thus be barred from observing

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not only the Chinese side but also most of the Indochinese side of the Sino-Vietnamese border area.

The creation of observation machinery would probably not, by itself, cause the Communists to take more aggressive action in Southeast Asia, except possibly in the unlikely event that it threatened to cripple the present methods of Chinese aid to Southeast Asian Communist movements. However, Peiping would probably direct a strong propaganda attack against the attempt to inspect the border regions between China and Southeast Asia, since, regardless of Chinese Communist intentions, Chinese Communist subversive activities in Southeast Asia cannot bear close scrutiny. Peiping's reaction to "interference" near its borders would probably not be affected by the fact that if a UN commission were dispatched to northern Burma it might serve to lessen the threat of the remnant Kuomintang forces under Li Mi; it is improbable that Peiping regards those forces as a major danger to its security -- it is even possible that Peiping may look upon Li Mi as an asset to its propaganda effort to demonstrate US "aggression."

A UN commission in Southeast Asia would not by itself seriously affect Communist intentions toward the area. However, if the dispatch of a UN commission to Southeast Asia were an adjunct to a warning or threat of the type discussed below, it might greatly reinforce the effectiveness of that warning.

B. A General Warning (by the US Alone, by the US, UK and France, or by the UN General Assembly). A general warning expressing concern at possible Chinese aggression might be issued by the US alone or by the US,

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UK and France in the form of public statements or a diplomatic demarche, amplifying statements made in the UN by delegates of these three countries on January 28 and subsequently. The warning might possibly be given additional^{weight} by a UN General Assembly resolution along the lines of the General Assembly's resolution of December 14, 1951 in response to Yugoslavia's complaint of subversive activities by the USSR and its satellites. A warning issued by the US or the US, UK and France would have considerable effect on the Peiping regime as an indication of Western determination not to tolerate aggression in Southeast Asia. A parallel UN warning would increase this effectiveness, but a UN warning unaccompanied by a military commitment or an expression of Western determination might be dismissed by the Communist leadership as inconclusive evidence of Western intentions, particularly since it is improbable that a warning in which a large number of countries would join would be very firmly worded.

A warning issued secretly through diplomatic channels would prevent questions of face from arising and would appear less provocative. However, it might be construed by the Communists as an indication that the issuing powers were unwilling to publish the warning because the fear of international disapproval and of domestic opposition to an increased Far Eastern commitment.

C. Threat of Specific Sanctions. The US, the US, UK and France, or the UN could issue a threat, either publicly or through diplomatic channels, of specific sanctions to be applied to Communist China in the event of an attack on Southeast Asia. These sanctions could include a complete trade embargo, a naval blockade, defensive military action in Southeast Asia by air, naval, or ground units not now committed in that area, and counter-

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offensive military action against Communist China itself by air, naval, or ground forces (including those of the Kuomintang). The vulnerability of Communist China to some of these courses of action are discussed in OIR contributions to SE-20, December 3, 1951.

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The threat of sanctions limited to economic measures (trade embargo or naval blockade), whether expressed by the US alone, by the US, UK and France jointly, or in the name of the UN, would probably have little effect either in deterring or precipitating a Chinese Communist attack on Southeast Asia, since Peiping probably already expects a tightening of the present economic sanctions in the event of overt Chinese Communist intervention in Southeast Asia.

A threat of sanctions including defensive military action by forces not now committed in Southeast Asia would be a serious deterrent to Communist action. The more firmly such a threat is worded, the greater would be its probable effect, since it also would increase, in Peiping's eyes, the danger of an eventual broadening of military action to the Chinese mainland itself.

The most effective threat would be one of a speedy counter-offensive against Communist China itself, including possible US-supported landings by KMT forces from Taiwan. It is improbable that Peiping would risk intervention in the face of such a threat, unless in the context of a general war in which the USSR would presumably also be involved.

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Annex II:

Prospects for UN and Allied Support of Deterrent ActionsA. United Kingdom

1. Peace Team. The UK would accept the appointment of a UN Peace observation Team to watch the situation in SEA on the grounds that the value of such a team was demonstrated in Korea and that it would indicate to Red China the collective concern and determination of UN members to contain aggression. (The UK has proposed the formation of such a group to observe the situation created by remnant KMT troops in north Burma.)
2. General Warning. If the UN peace team were appointed the UK would regard its establishment as a general warning to Red China. If that warning needed to be spelled out in explicit terms, the UK would probably prefer that it be drafted under UN auspices. However, it is already clear from the Truman-Churchill talks communique, from Eden's strong warning to China in his Columbia University speech, and from Churchill's speech to Congress on January 17 that UK policy toward any SEA aggression by Red China is on the record. The warning has been made and a formal UN declaration would in British eyes merely reiterate a position already taken.
3. Specific Sanctions. In general, if the threat of specific sanctions is deemed necessary the UK would prefer a joint approach with the US and France under some UN formula. The UK would not like the US to assume the sole responsibility for possible sanctions against Red China on the grounds that unilateral US action would probably go too far and be needlessly provocative.

The UK, considering its present economic situation and the importance of maintaining some trade in South Asia and at Hong Kong, would be unwilling

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to endorse openly the threat of a complete trade embargo, even though such an embargo would probably result from the fact of Communist Chinese aggression in SEA. The British are not desirous of anticipating that outcome.

The UK will probably accept the sanction of a naval blockade of certain Chinese ports, if the Korean truce talks break down and military action is resumed on a major scale. If aggression spread to SEA the UK would endorse similar action under UN auspices, with the US, UK, and France the main principals, and with the US the principal agent of the joint policy. The UK would almost certainly contribute naval units to the joint operation; so also would Australia and New Zealand.

The UK would support joint defensive military action to contain and repel aggression in SEA. The British role would be larger than in Korea in terms of numbers of troops and materiel, but the UK would expect the US to bear a major military role in the defense of the region. Without the US and considering the weakness of the British and the French the UK would regard the threat of this sanction as empty.

The UK would hesitate to use the threat of a counter-offensive against Red China, involving an all-out attack on the mainland by land, sea, and air. It would not endorse such action by the US alone. The UK might be forced to endorse a counter-offensive under joint US-UK-French auspices within the UN framework, if the scale and scope of Red China's attack were large and sustained and threatened to overrun Western positions in SEA in short order. However, if the pattern of Chinese attack was local, sporadic, and limited, generally aimed at long-term harassment rather than sudden military decision,

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the UK might prefer to deal with each situation as best it could in concert with its allies rather than to risk total warfare in the Far East, which would almost certainly result from a major counter-offensive against Red China. Moreover, the UK is already thinly spread militarily and not ready or willing to take on more commitments. Western Europe and the Near East remain the principal British defense preoccupations.

B. FRANCE

1. UN Peace Team. French reaction to the proposal of creating a UN Commission to watch the Southeast Asian situation would probably be favorable, as one step towards securing allied military action in Indochina should direct Chinese intervention occur in that area. Chinese aggression in Burma or Malaya would sufficiently endanger Indochina both militarily and from a psychological point of view for the French, no doubt, to accept the possible sequel to empowering a Commission, -- that is, the furnishing of token troops for the defense of those areas. However, demands for "proper safeguards" of French interests in FIC would be forthcoming if it appeared, as a result, that the Indochina political problem would be submitted to the UN. These demands would probably be made despite French possession of veto power in the UN.

2. General Warning. Issuance of a broad general warning covering the possibility of Chinese invasion of Indochina to be given by the UN powers now fighting in Korea is desired by the French. For this reason, they suggested a draft of their own of the declaration to be made by these powers after the completion of a Korean armistice; the draft contained the phrase "any other act of aggression...would find us again united and prompt to resist."

Consideration of the alternatives of warnings issued by the US

alone or by the US, UK, and France is perhaps academic in view of 1) French acceptance of the US draft statement which, on the surface, confines the warning to a renewed attack in Korea, and 2) US commitments of air and naval assistance in the case of a Chinese invasion of FIC.

3. Sanctions. Threats of specific sanctions against Communist China before direct Chinese intervention takes place would not have favorable French reaction. On the occasion of the presentation to US officials in Paris of the French draft statement referred to under 2. Paris Embassy representatives pointed out that the statement would seem to deny the French any liberty of action China in the event of increased Chinese indirect aid to Viet-Minh forces. The Quai d'Orsay spokesman gave as his personal view that the French desired no such liberty unless the change in Chinese support of the Viet-Minh was qualitative rather than quantitative. Briefly, the French Government would not approve action which, in its view, might prove provocative to Communist China.

C. The United Nations. The UN would probably not support a strongly worded warning or threat against Communist China prior to an actual invasion of southeast Asia, particularly since the present situation in Indochina and Malaya is, to many countries, tainted with British and French "colonialism." The UN might express its "concern," advise reconciliation of differences, and create observation machinery upon the request of the concerned countries if sufficient pressure were brought to bear by the US, UK, or France. Such steps might give supplementary moral weight to a more direct warning by the major powers involved.

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